

VOICE IN THE WILDERNESS

The Sixth National Youth Conference

On Saturday 22 January at 6:30pm, the English Liturgy at St George was honoured by the presence of His Eminence Archbishop Stylianos, and Their Graces Bishops Ezekiel, Joseph and Seraphim. Also attending the Liturgy were members of the clergy from all over Australia and many of the delegates who had come for the Conference. These National Youth Conferences are held every two years to allow discussion on various or specific themes that affect the Youth of today, between the Youth and their clergy.

At the end of the Divine Liturgy, His Eminence expressed his thoughts and feelings regarding the place of English in the Greek Orthodox Church of Australia. He spoke in an optimistic and positive way of how the English Language in that Liturgy effectively captured the Orthodox Spirit.

Then, His Eminence invited Professor Evggelos Theodorou (Professor of Theology at the University of Athens) to say a few

He expressed his pleasure at having this opportunity to come to Australia to speak at the Conference and also to experience the Divine Liturgy in English. This, he said, was continuing the Orthodox Tradition of bringing Orthodoxy to the world.

Afterwards everyone went over to the courtyard of the Welfare Centre where a Barbecue dinner was served. Locals and delegates from all over Australia began to get to know each other during what ended up being a warm and enjoyable evening.

On the following Sunday morning, His Eminence and Their Graces liturgised at St George again, and Archbishop Stylianos gave an edifying sermon to the congregation. Afterwards, there followed an informal lunch at the Greek Club.

That evening there was a Thanksgiving Service held, at the end of which the Governor of Queensland expressed her best wishes for the success of the Conference. Then everyone returned to the Greek Club for a formal dinner to mark the official opening of the Sixth National Youth Conference.

Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday morning were devoted to the presentation and discussion of His Eminence's and Professor Theodorou's papers.

His Eminence's paper was entitled "Secular Values and Christian Ethics", while Professor Theodorou's was "Values and their Correct Hierarchy". Both papers were presented in English and about 80 percent of

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Conference
(continued)**

the discussion was in English. It was gratifying to see how His Eminence and Professor Theodorou

gave 100 percent effort to speak in English, despite the difficulty they have with the language.

A great deal of discussion resulted, which made many delegates re evaluate the moral issues facing an Orthodox Christian in this society. The discussions closed with His Eminence inviting Sister Kallistheni from the Holy Convent of Panagia Gorgoepikoos. Geelong, Victoria, to say a few words.

Caught by surprise, Sister Kallistheni gave a totally impromptu speech. Shyly, and speaking from the heart, she told us a little of her spiritual journey back to Orthodoxy. A third generation Greek-Australian, living in a small town, she had little contact with the Orthodox Church or Greek Culture. She eventually gave her whole life to Christ and went to live in a convent in Greece. She had great difficulty at first adjusting because she didn't even know a word of Greek. But, as she admitted, this helped to strengthen her, for the only refuge she had was Jesus. She stayed in that convent for about 8 or 9 years, until Archbishop Stylianos invited her to return to Australia and open a convent here. At first she was reluctant to do so, because she couldn't bear to be parted from her sisters whom she had grown to love deeply. But, she did come for us - the Orthodox Youth of Australia - in order to help play a part in cultivating Orthodoxy on this continent. She concluded by sincerely inviting everyone to the convent - the official opening of which is to be Saturday 26 February 1994. By the end of Sister Kallistheni's speech there was hardly a dry eye in the room. Everyone was deeply moved by Sister Kallistheni's faith and love.

That afternoon the delegates went by bus to Sanctuary Cove and then on a boat cruise to Fisherman's Wharf. It was a very enjoyable cruise and the weather was perfect.

At 6:30pm, Vespers was held at the Church of St Anna, on the Gold Coast. The church was packed with delegates and locals.

Afterwards, dinner was served at the nearby hall. There, Archbishop Stylianos gave his last speech for the Conference. Firstly, His Eminence thanked everyone involved in the Conference - the Governor, Professor Theodorou, the Organising Committee, the ladies who prepared the meals, the sponsors, the delegates, and so many others! His Eminence finished his speech by announcing the location of the Seventh National Youth Conference to be held in 1996 - Sydney! At that, applause and a roar of approval emanated from the Sydney delegates.



Our Archdiocese is raising funds to go towards the new Holy Convent of Panagia Gorgoepikoos in Geelong, Victoria. If you would like to make a donation, or help in some fund-raising, please phone Fr. Gregory on 844 3669.

****COFFEE ROSTER****

Everyone is invited to come over to the Respite Centre, after the Liturgy of a Saturday evening for a chat and a tea/coffee. The roster for 1994 is now being drawn up - if you wish to be on the roster, or if you just have a question about the suppers. Please contact Nicky cassimatis on- 899 1070

HOPE TO SEE YOU ALL AFTER THE
LITURGY - AS WELL!

The Choir Is Expanding

The English Liturgy Choir is expanding in order to cope with the ever-increasing demand for English Liturgies, weddings, baptisms and other services. We would like to increase the size of the choir to the point where we can have a functional choir at every service without requiring the same people to sing at every service.

There is no audition (most of the choir has no previous musical experience), and it is a lot of fun as well as rewarding. If you are interested / curious / breathing, call Nick Inglis (349 7450) or Patra Ganis (398 5398).

PARISH LIBRARY

Want to borrow books on the Orthodox Faith instead of buying? Feel free to use our Parish Library! Free of charge, you can register as a borrower and borrow books for up to two weeks at a time. The Library is open every Monday night from 7:30 - 9:00pm. Want to know more? Phone Sophrony our Library Co-Ordinator on 849 2679.

Great Lent

For 40 days, Orthodox Christians prepare for Holy Week. This mirrors the 40 days Jesus fasted in the wilderness in preparation for His ministry. Jesus fasted to overcome temptation, giving us an example to follow. For us also, the Lenten fast is a spiritual preparation for the Passion and Resurrection of Christ. Briefly, we'll mention two aspects of preparation: the physical and the spiritual.

Physically, we prepare by fasting from certain foods - meat, fish, animal products and alcoholic spirits, and on certain days we fast also from oil and wine (seafood and beer are permissible, but in moderation). This is an attempt to emulate Adam and Eve in their original state before the fall. Also, a

little dieting does wonders for our bodily health.

The most important physical benefit, though, is developing self-control. When we can say "no" to a tempting piece of chocolate we are learning to subject all our cravings and desires to our will.

Spiritually, we "fast" from sin. But, of course, such "fasting" should be year-round. Prayer is an important aspect of fasting. Fasting from food does no good unless it's accompanied by prayer and repentance.

Remember, these basic rules are for all able-bodied Orthodox Christians. For those who have health problems, please see your parish priest for further advice.

The Martyrs

The miracle of the spreading and strengthening of Christianity around the world didn't occur only via the 12 Apostles. It didn't even occur only via the missionaries later on. Christianity spread its roots deeply in the belief of the Holy Trinity because it was literally saturated with the pure blood of its Martyrs. Many of the onlookers, who were hard and cruel, softened before the numerous and horrifying tortures. Disinterest, by the observers of

the persecutions, became intense interest, and disbelief became fervent belief and yearning to admit their faith in God and the Sacrament of Baptism. The Martyr's silence, his face radiant before the harshest torture, made him the loudest preacher, the god-inspiring confessor. Hundreds, even thousands of pagans, embraced the religion of Christ after a Martyr's ordeal.

Children, young men and women, even the very old, make up the blessed multitude of Martyrs. Within this blessed multitude exist radiant couples: Makrianos and Poulheria, Andrianos and Natalia, Galaktion and Epistimi, Timothy and Mavra. Their similar ordeal and suffering brought them even closer than the Sacrament of Marriage. It made them Saints, and now they rejoice in the glory and grandeur of Heaven.

Saint Timothy and Saint Mavra were an exquisite couple - a couple whose life was continuously focused on God. With this intense yearning they achieved a holy life. They faced the harsh trials inflicted upon them by their persecutor with bravery and exemplary self-sacrifice. With their persistence they secured God's support and love. They remained firm and devoted in their faith of Christ until the end of their lives and their Martyrdom.

Grace and Free Will

Once again the organising committee for the English Liturgy would like to take the opportunity to wish all our Brothers and Sisters for their prayers and support in overseeing the growth of the English Liturgy.

Planning for the year is progressing, with courses, Bible studies, Retreats and social activities lined up for the whole year. Watch this spot for more information as the organisation is finalised.

The fact that humanity is in God's image means, among other things, that we possess free will. God wanted children, not slaves.

The Orthodox Church rejects any doctrine of grace which might seem to infringe upon humanity's freedom. To describe the relation between the grace of God and humanity's free will, Orthodoxy uses the term co-operation or synergy (synergia); in St. Paul's words: "We are fellow workers (synergoi) with God" (I Cor. 3:9). If humanity is to achieve full fellowship with God, we cannot do so without God's help, yet we must also play our own part: humanity as well as God must contribute to the common work, although what God does is of immeasurably greater importance than what we do. "The incorporation of humanity into Christ and union with God require the co-operation of two unequal, but equally necessary forces: divine grace and human will." The supreme example of synergy is the Mother of God.

This synergy is basically what is described in Scripture: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door - He does not break it down. The grace of God invites all but compels none.

It must not be imagined that because a person accepts God's grace, he thereby earns "merit". God's gifts are always free gifts, and people can never have any claims upon their Maker. But people, while they cannot "merit" salvation, must certainly work for it, since "faith without works is dead" (James 2:17)